the State has swelled to four millions and one-half of people, and that of the City of Philadelphia to one million.

Of all the history of State and City we may be justly proud, for the foundations on which it was built have been preserved and strengthened.

Of this vast growth our Society has been the living witness, for it was founded only sixty years after the landing of William Penn; and it is fitting that in addition to the full accounts that will be given by chroniclers of this great event and which will form part of our library, this brief notice of it should constitute part of our Minutes.

Pending nomination No. 969 and new nominations Nos. 970 to 976 were read.

And the meeting was adjourned.

*Obituary Notice of Ralph Waldo Emerson. By Charles G. Ames.*

*(Read before the American Philosophical Society, Nov. 3, 1882.)*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose name has honored the records of this Society since 1868, was born in Boston, May 25, 1803, and died in Concord, Mass., April 28, 1882. Of mixed Puritan and Huguenot ancestry, he brought into the 19th century the essences rather than the forms of Calvinistic creed and culture; and grew up as the handsome flower of a sturdy stock. His being was like a retort into which many generations of thoughtful piety had been distilled: for never was a clearer case of hereditary marking than in his tendency to the independent pursuit of high and sober studies. He had the physical make-up of a student, with just enough of healthy muscular development to furnish sheathing for a nervous structure of extraordinary fineness and vigor.

Of how many New England lads, in the early part of this century, may the same story be told: Graduating from Harvard at 18, then teaching for a while, then settling to the study of divinity. Already familiar with Plato and Montaigne, whose mixed coloring matter had passed into his blood, the lad was yet fond of Augustine, Pascal, and Jeremy Taylor. He had also come in contact with the free devoutness and benevolence of Dr. Channing, and had yielded to the spell of Wordsworth and Coleridge. A little later he was to feel the powerful influence of Carlyle and Goethe.

In 1826 he began to preach; in 1829 he was ordained and installed minister of a Unitarian Church in Boston. His sermons struck the dominant note of all his later thinking and writing, their evident purpose being to induce in each hearer the assurance of "life in himself." It was this intensity of faith in the intimate relations of each human spirit to the Di-

vine, along with a clear perception of religious symbolism in all facts, that made traditional outward observances at first a matter of indifference, and then of oppressive unreality. In three years and a half, his pastoral relations were amicably dissolved, because he had reached conclusions essentially like those of the Society of Friends concerning the valuelessness of the ordinances.

The strain of these experiences was severe; but the liberty which now came to him was utilized to the advantage of mind and body by a voyage to Europe, which brought him to personal acquaintance with the eminent men whose genius had already lighted his way. On his return he established himself for life in the quiet rural village of Concord, and entered on a ministry for which no pulpit then seemed large or free enough—a ministry which, running through forty-eight years, to his death, gradually found through press and lecture platform its own fit audience; small at first, but, as the event has proved, sufficient to put him in vital connection with the mind of the world.

Carlyle, whose wine had not yet turned to vinegar, was then putting forth his testimony in England, with a limited hearing. He, as well as the American public, was indebted to Emerson for the reproduction of "Sartor Resartus" and a volume of "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays" on this side the water. Coleridge and Carlyle had inoculated the English mind with the nobler German literature; Emerson was one of those through whom it passed to America; and to many an ingenuous youth it was like the discovery of new worlds.

But no imported mental fertilizer has proved more effective than the native product. Emerson himself has probably influenced our ways of thought and feeling and expression quite as much as any man of the century; and all this without the arts or qualities of popularity, and even in spite of multitudinous protests. The semi-mystic quality of his thought predisposed him to sympathize with the subtle spirituality of Plato and the great Germans; and the New England mind, weary of the old mechanical theories of creation and revelation, was ripe for revolution. Transcendentalism, which is a wholesale believing, came in good time to save us from wholesale denials. Mr. Geo. W. Cooke describes this movement as "an attempt of the human mind to recover a natural and assured faith in moral things." This faith finds due warrant in our direct original perception of spiritual realities, by a power which transcends the senses—a power which is proper to all men, and which is our share in that universal and absolute Reason out of which flows the whole order of the universe.

The practical applications of such a philosophy are endless. Creation being an expression of the Infinite Intelligence, poetry finds its divine justification and rises into a hymn. Nature appears as a mirror of mind, and all her laws and secrets correspond to our clearest inward discoveries, so that science becomes a parable. And as reason is one thing in all men,

all men become ministers to each other's completeness. What Emerson has to say of Personal Conduct and Social Aims comes to this: That, as it takes all sorts of men to make a world, each one of us can best contribute to the perfect result by giving full scope to all that properly belongs to himself. Be a brick and there will be a place for you in the wall. Every man, like every grain of sand, is a theatre for the play of all the powers and laws of the Kosmos. To distrust yourself is atheism; to despise your neighbor is blasphemy; to help yourself to all the benefits the universe offers—through nature, books, society, solitude, industry and repose—is only to come into your inheritance, and is therefore the true method of culture. Disorder, misery, chaos, perdition—they all come from inward defect and non-fidelity.

All this, and the system of thought to which it belongs, may seem tame and trite enough now, but it sounded strange and heretical a half century ago. It was indeed a republication of the best thought of earlier ages; but it was foreign to the common literature and the current religion.

In 1837, Emerson gave his address on "The American Scholar," before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard. Mr. Alcott tells us that it was heard with delight by some, but with confusion and consternation by others; or, as James Russell Lowell says, with "enthusiasm of approval and grim silence of foregone dissent." Yet it does not now strike us as dangerous doctrine to teach that America ought not to depend on imported ideas but should produce her own scholars, and that these should seek truth and reality from original sources. We are no longer scared if a bold thinker declares that truth should spring out of the earth whereon *we* tread, and that righteousness should look down from the heavens that bend over *our* heads, as well as from the soil and skies of ancient Palestine. Nor is it any longer an unsavory and *outré* discourse which teaches that character is the end and aim of all truth and all discipline. It is almost startling to consider how lightly and cheaply, and as matters of course, we hold certain grand truths which make our common daylight, but which to former times were like unrisen stars. A knowledge of the inward world has grown with a knowledge of the outward world.

> "Few mortal feet these loftier heights had gained
> Whence the wide realms of Nature we descry;
> In vain their eyes our longing fathers strained,
> To scan with wondering gaze the summits high
> That far beneath their children's footpaths lie."

It is not important to determine Emerson's relation to metaphysical systems. He was neither ignorant of them nor fond of them, being very shy of finalities. But in his attempt at simple and large statement, he seems to have incorporated the best results of other men's thinking.

There are passages in Mr. Emerson's writings which strongly arraign what he once called "this mountainous folly of Church and State;" but this is only his fine scorn of sham and make-believe. He is never vio-

lent against institutions ; he honors their real merits and services ; but he trusts wholly to vital energies for improvements and reconstructions.

The total effect of his work has been to disclose our undeveloped resources, to make us aware that we are born to an inheritance of infinite richness, and that no man need hesitate to avail himself of all the advantages which the universe offers. At the same time, his writings operate as a continual rebuke of self-consciousness, cowardice, cupidity, weak indulgence and pretence. To read Emerson *sympathetically* is to be enlarged, liberated, shamed out of mean, self-regard, and lifted into universal fellowships.

Not the least notable trait is a certain comprehensiveness, nurtured by his philosophy. His writings abound in allusions which show his mental omnivorousness, his quick sympathy with the thought of all ages and times, his hospitality to "many men of many minds," his ability to grasp and reconcile contrarieties, and the ease with which he found a place for all sorts of facts. Revelling in the abstruse, and living much on the mountain-top where he could catch and report downward to mortals the wandering whispers of the upper air, he yet joined with Bacon in honoring "the studies that are for delight, for ornament, and for ability," and held in high appreciation the men of affairs and the masters of action.

A tone of playfulness testifies to the health of his spirit. There is no trace of moodiness or indigestion in his writings, no sour eructations, no narcotized imaginings, no sore-headedness nor skin-blotches, nor any sign of the itch for praise. He makes it easier to believe in miracles of healing : virtue goes out of him for the driving away of sad and surly humors and the rectifying of small insanities.

The material of his poetry is too much like that of his prose to address a different class of minds. The ideas of his essays set themselves to music and mount on wings. Nature supplies imagery and vehicle ; for in nature, as in God, he lived and moved and had his being. There is a subtle, never-dying charm in this clear-obscure where earth and heaven meet. The verse, whose theme flames up toward the infinite, yet smells of the soil and the breath of kine ; it smacks of tree-sap and sea-salt ; the country-brook glides into the lines ; one hears the wind-harp and the bird-song ; the "dedicated blocks" of granite build the mountain into an altar from whose top the cloud-rack flows like incense. And nothing goes on in leaf or shell, in chemic eddies or solemn march of constellations, in the little life of the insect or the grand sweeps of history, but lo ! these are parts of the ways of the all-perfect Over-Soul—the mystery ever disclosed yet ever hidden.

Many random readers receive the impression that there is nothing like unity or method in Emerson's mind ; that his works are but a heap of brilliant, unrelated fragments. True, he lacks literary unity, and is careless of logical construction ; and he despises the charge of inconsistency as "the bugbear of little minds." But once grasp his larger meanings,

or look from his central point of view, and his thought appears as whole as the globe or the solar system. It would not be easy to find a leading author whose mental products are more coherent or who is so free from self-contradictions. He is indeed at no more pains to protect himself from the *imputation* of contradiction than is a photographer who shifts his camera to secure a dozen views of the same landscape. If the pictures tell different stories, that is no affair of his: let nature look to it!

Emerson is said to have pleased himself with the "hope of a world in which we shall see things but once, and then pass on to something new." I construe this extravaganza, not as the sign of a mad love of novelty, but as a rebuke to mental inhospitality, as the expression of his strong faith that all facts and truths must agree, and that the universe can supply inexhaustible variety without danger of falling back into chaos.

With all his high soarings, he was at home on the ground, and astonished his friends by his practicalness and aptness for business. His occasional deliverances on public affairs were clear and weighty. One who sat with him on the Board of Overseers of Harvard University, says that his judgment was as much "waited for" as that of any other member. Another testifies that his discretion in regard to investments in stocks, etc., was quite equal to his ability as a writer and thinker.

It would indeed be possible to gather out of his ten volumes an excellent body of maxims for every day use, shrewd, pithy, and full of mother-wit. But his claim to our grateful respect rests on far higher grounds. He was not merely virtuous; he was virtue itself; and he taught to all men its open secret. And he has illustrated in life-size, the close-blending of high intelligence with high excellence. In his writings and in himself, the ethical quality is inseparable from thought. He never puts it on, he never puts it off—a sore puzzle to those who judge of possession by profession, or who think of the Holy Ghost as an occasional visitor, and not as a permanent resident in the human temple.

One who knew him long ago and later, says he gave the impression of a humble listener and learner. This tells the whole story of his greatness. For such an attitude implies neither empty narrowness nor idle passivity. To be, as he was, in sympathetic relations with the thoughts of mankind in all ages, and yet to lie open, as he did, to the teachings of primal reality—passionless, unprepossessed and unprejudiced—requires not only fine susceptibility, but a mind of great breadth and power. But his activity is easy and unconscious to himself; his faculties play like the strings of an æolian harp, because they are played on by invisible power. One result appears in the impersonal quality of this work. He never attacks and never defends. He searches defects and exposes error as the light does. He criticises, not by analysis, but by insight; like his own humble-bee, he simply leaves the chaff and takes the wheat. This mental process implies great labor-saving. What need to handle over and over the

crude mass of facts and phenomena, when one can directly seize their essence and meaning, as the evening wind seizes the fragrance of a whole meadow full of flowers, without disturbing root, stalk or petal?

I believe the first appearance of Mr. Emerson's name in the Proceedings of this Society, since his election to membership, is in the announcement of his death. But he was one of the few Americans who have deservedly gained the name of a philosopher, in both its original and its acquired sense. A lover of wisdom, he also searches with keen insight behind phenomena into the mystery of causation and the unity of law; and he converts all knowledge into value by showing its uses in the production and perfecting of the ideal life. "To live with the gods" and "to keep the divinity within us free from harm," was the lofty aspiration of ancient wisdom; and "the science of living" has not yet advanced beyond these maxims of the Stoics, which seem identical in purpose with the Hebrew and Christian ideal of a pure heart and a life fashioned in the image of the Highest. Though our great good friend has not wrought as an organizer of knowledge, he has accomplished the larger work of profoundly stimulating the human mind and turning it to noble pursuits; and he has illuminated the whole field of research. Structure in his view was always inferior to function, and function to purpose or spirit. As an interviewer of nature and of the soul, his office was to report—to interpret the universe to man, and man to himself. In all this there are no finalities; since, as J. S. Mill remarks, "On all great subjects there is always something more to be said." But many a coming seer will find a fountain of light for cleansing his eyes from earth-dust in the rays that stream from the mind of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

*Stated Meeting, Nov. 17, 1882.*

Present, 9 members.

Vice-President, Mr. PRICE, in the Chair.

Letters of acknowledgment were received from the Royal Society, Upsal (xv., 3; 104–108); Swiss Society of Natural Science (107, 108): Society of Physics and Natural History, Geneva (xv., 3; 106–108; List of Members): Royal Society of London (xv., 3; 107–109); and Cincinnati Observatory (65–80, 88, 92, 107, 110).

Letters of Envoy were received from the Royal Academy of Stockholm; Royal Society of Upsal, dated June 15, 1882;